



Morning Alert - Tuesday, May 15, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All broadcasters and several national papers led with reports on the arrest yesterday of a 23-year-old man for his involvement in the murder of a 7-year-old girl in Niigata.

Mainichi and Yomiuri led with reports on the repercussions of the relocation of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

INTERNATIONAL

Abe voices hope to be briefed by President Trump on summit with DPRK

All Monday evening papers quoted Prime Minister Abe as saying at a Lower House Budget Committee session earlier in the day: "I would like to hear direct from President Trump about the outcome of the U.S.-DPRK summit. We will conduct coordination to determine how that can be done." The premier added that he will take advantage of the G7 summit in Canada on June 8-9 to present Japan's views to the President ahead of the U.S.-DPRK talks. Concerning the abduction issue, Abe said that President Trump has clearly said that he will bring up the matter in his summit with the DPRK leader. Abe added that he will not meet with Kim Jong Un himself unless such a summit is expected to lead to a resolution of the abduction issue.

Sankei said the GOJ is hoping to arrange an Abe-Trump meeting by capitalizing on a possible stopover in Japan for refueling on the way back to Washington, adding that it is still uncertain whether the idea will materialize since South Korea may also request a post-DPRK summit meeting between President Moon and President Trump. Mainichi wrote that several ideas are being considered for the proposed U.S.-Japan summit, including the possibility of Abe travelling to Singapore.

In a related story, Asahi, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that PM Abe disclosed at the Diet yesterday that when stopping at Yokota AB last week for refueling on his way home from North Korea, Secretary of State Pompeo phoned Foreign Minister Kono to brief him on his latest Pyongyang trip. Abe reportedly said to the Diet: "Secretary Pompeo is spearheading the preparations for the U.S.-North Korea summit."

Japan ponders potential U.S. shift toward easing pressure on DPRK

Asahi speculated that the Abe administration has begun mulling its response to a possible U.S. decision to relax economic sanctions on the DPRK based on the assessment that the Trump administration is inclined to ease its pressure on the Kim regime. As the GOJ has long maintained that it will not extend large-scale economic support to Pyongyang until the abduction issue is resolved, the daily expressed concern that Japan might become isolated if calls grow within the international community for allowing North Korea to receive rewards in exchange for steps toward denuclearization. The daily speculated that even if Washington moves to relax sanctions imposed on the basis of UN Security Council resolutions, Tokyo is likely to maintain sanctions of its own.

In a related story, Nikkei conjectured that the Trump administration, despite its official policy of maintaining maximum pressure until North Korea completely abandons its nuclear weapons program, might already be tempted to soften its hardline approach. The daily highlighted remarks made on TV on Sunday by Secretary Pompeo, who reportedly suggested potential investment in North Korea's energy and agricultural sectors by American companies contingent on the fulfillment of its pledge to denuclearize. The daily opined that as China, South Korea, and Russia are willing to accommodate North Korea's plan to proceed with denuclearization in a "phased" manner, international pressure on the Kim regime may weaken even before the completion of denuclearization.

Suga expresses concern about relocation of U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem

All papers reported that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga commented on the relocation of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem by saying: "We are worried that the transfer may make the situation surrounding Middle East peace increasingly severe and further aggravate the regional situation." The top government spokesman underscored Japan's position of supporting a "two-state solution." As for Japan's opposition to the relocation, Asahi quoted Foreign Minister Kono as saying on a TV program last night: "There is an understanding between the U.S. and Japan that the two nations have different positions on the Middle East. The Palestinians may have concluded that the United States is no longer qualified to be an arbitrator as a result of the embassy transfer. However, it is still important for the Israelis and the Palestinians to hold negotiations with the U.S. serving as a middleman."

Meanwhile, Nikkei wrote that Japan is in a dilemma over diplomacy in the Middle East, since the recent U.S. decisions to move the embassy to Jerusalem and withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal are not compatible with Tokyo's positions. The Nikkei editorialized that although the GOJ has

maintained amicable relations with most nations in the region, the Trump administration's "pro-Israel, anti-Iran" policy will make it difficult for Tokyo to conduct balanced diplomacy there especially given that Japan desperately needs U.S. support in dealing with North Korea. The paper wrote that the Abe administration is being extremely careful to prevent the two nations' different approaches to the Middle East from having adverse effects on bilateral coordination on the DPRK. Concerning the U.S. departure from the Iran nuclear accord, Abe reportedly said to the parliament yesterday: "President Trump has said that there are various problems with the deal. I understand some of his concerns."

SECURITY

U.S. gov't holds key to compensation for victims of crimes by military personnel

Asahi published a prominent inside-page article on several cases in which the families of Japanese victims of "off duty" offenses committed by U.S. service members were not fully compensated, noting that the payment of compensation is up to the U.S. government. The article said the compensation mechanism set forth by the SOFA and an accompanying arrangement are too complicated for the victims to receive adequate payment.

Okinawa Governor Onaga to be released from hospital today

All papers except Nikkei reported on an announcement made by the Okinawa prefectural government yesterday that Governor Onaga will be discharged from the hospital today, saying that he will hold a press conference to explain his health condition this afternoon. The governor reportedly plans to resume his official duties by working a few days a week at first.

U.S. aircraft make emergency landings in Ibaraki

Mainichi wrote that two U.S. Navy aircraft made emergency landings at ASDF Hyakuri Base in Ibaraki Prefecture on Monday while en route from Guam to Misawa AB. According to the article, two of three EA-18G Growlers flying together decided to make precautionary landings for refueling following a warning light that came on in the cockpit of one of the three electronic warfare aircraft. No injuries were reported.

MOD to brief two prefectures on deployment of Aegis Ashore

Nikkei wrote that the Defense Ministry is planning to provide explanations to the Akita and Yamaguchi prefectural governments on its plan to deploy Aegis Ashore batteries in the two prefectures.

Nago chief to meet with leading Japanese businessmen

Sankei wrote that Nago Mayor Toguchi plans to hold talks with Keidanren Chairman Sakakibara tomorrow to ask for business investment in his municipality, noting that the Abe administration helped to arrange what the daily said is an unusual meeting between the leader of a municipality and the top Japanese businessman in a bid to cement the mayor's support for the FRF construction off

Camp Schwab. Toguchi is also expected to meet with senior officials of two other business organizations including the Computer Software Association of Japan.

